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The Last Chronicle of Barset

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

With Illustrations by G. H. Thomas

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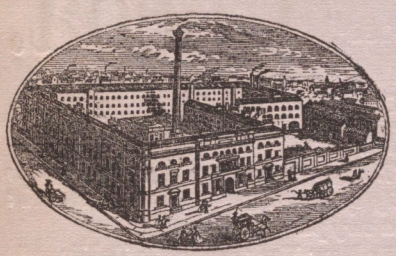

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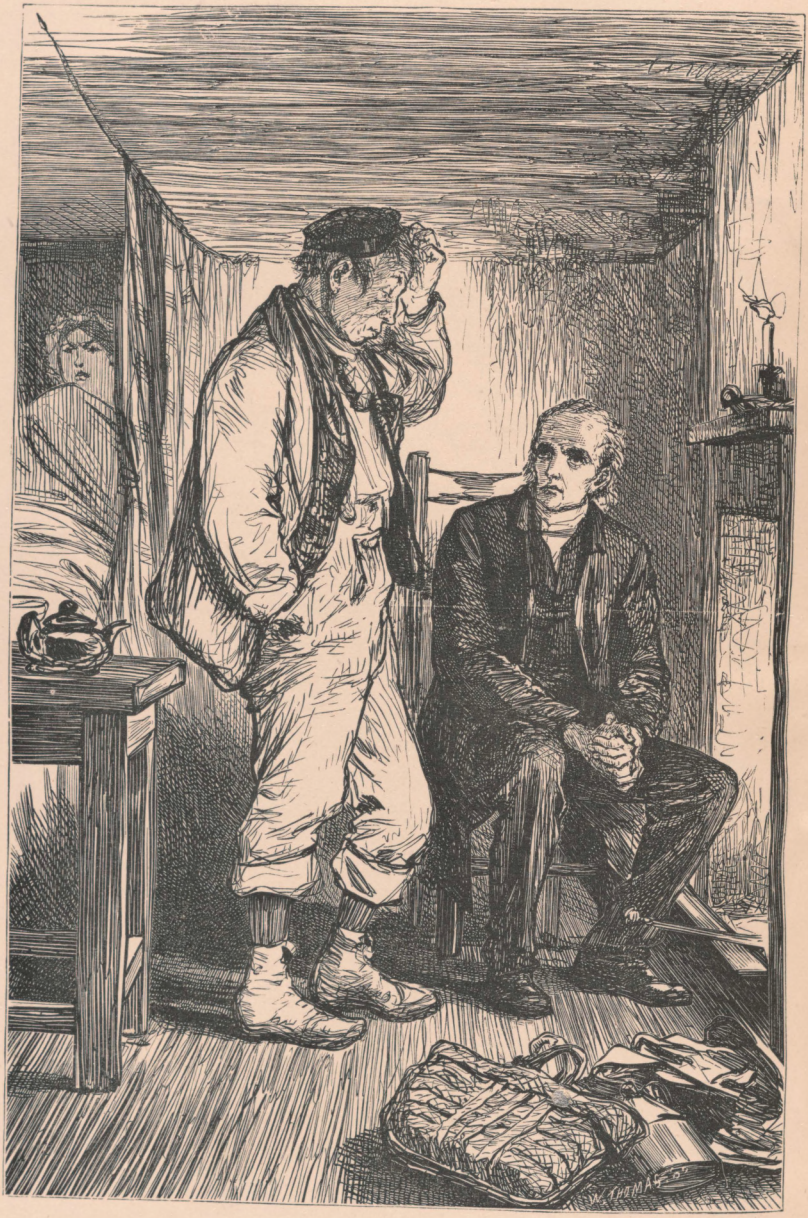
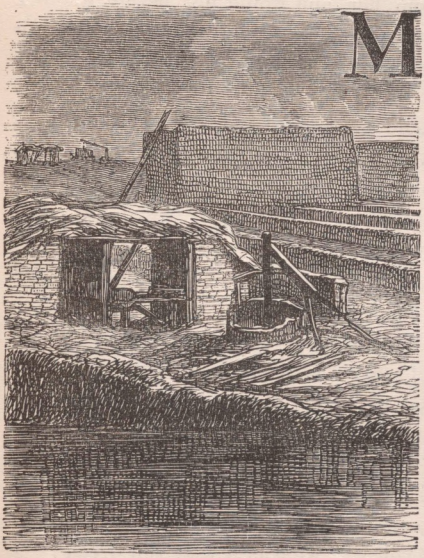


"Speak out, Dan."

CHAPTER XII.

MR. CRAWLEY SEEKS FOR SYMPATHY.



MATTERS went very badly indeed in the parsonage house at Hogglestock. On the Friday morning, the morning of the day after his committal, Mr. Crawley got up very early, long before the daylight, and dressing himself in the dark, groped his way downstairs. His wife having vainly striven to persuade him to remain where he was, followed him into the cold room below with a lighted candle. She found him standing with his hat on and with his old cloak, as though he were prepared to go out. "Why do you do this?" she said. "You will make yourself ill with the cold and the night air; and then you, and I too, will be worse than we now are."

"We cannot be worse. You cannot be worse, and for me it does not signify. Let me pass."

"I will not let you pass, Josiah. Be a man and bear it. Ask God for strength, instead of seeking it in an over-indulgence of your own sorrow."

"Indulgence!"

"Yes, love;—indulgence. It is indulgence. You will allow your mind to dwell on nothing for a moment but your own wrongs."

"What else have I that I can think of? Is not all the world against me?"

"Am I against you?"

"Sometimes I think you are. When you accuse me of self-indulgence you are against me,—me, who for myself have desired nothing

but to be allowed to do my duty, and to have bread enough to keep me alive, and clothes enough to make me decent."

"Is it not self-indulgence, this giving way to grief? Who would know so well as you how to teach the lesson of endurance to others? Come, love. Lay down your hat. It cannot be fitting that you should go out into the wet and cold of the raw morning."

For a moment he hesitated, but as she raised her hand to take his cloak from him he drew back from her, and would not permit it. "I shall find those up whom I want to see," he said. "I must visit my flock, and I dare not go through the parish by daylight lest they hoot after me as a thief."

"Not one in Hogglestock would say a word to insult you."

"Would they not? The very children in the school whisper at me. Let me pass, I say. It has not as yet come to that, that I should be stopped in my egress and ingress. They have—bailed me; and while their bail lasts, I may go where I will."

"Oh, Josiah, what words to me! Have I ever stopped your liberty? Would I not give my life to secure it?"

"Let me go, then, now. I tell you that I have business in hand."

"But I will go with you? I will be ready in an instant."

"You go! Why should you go? Are there not the children for you to mind?"

"There is only Jane."

"Stay with her, then. Why should you go about the parish?" She still held him by the cloak, and looked anxiously up into his face. "Woman," he said, raising his voice, "what is it that you dread? I command you to tell me what is it that you fear?" He had now taken hold of her by the shoulder, slightly thrusting her from him, so that he might see her face by the dim light of the single candle. "Speak, I say. What is that you think that I shall do?"

"Dearest, I know that you will be better at home, better with me, than you can be on such a morning as this out in the cold damp air."

"And is that all?" He looked hard at her, while she returned his gaze with beseeching loving eyes. "Is there nothing behind, that you will not tell me?"

She paused for a moment before she replied. She had never lied to him. She could not lie to him. "I wish you knew my heart towards you," she said, "with all and everything in it."

"I know your heart well, but I want to know your mind. Why would you persuade me not to go out among my poor?"

"Because it will be bad for you to be out alone in the dark lanes, in the mud and wet, thinking of your sorrow. You will brood over it till you will lose your senses through the intensity of your grief. You will stand out in the cold air, forgetful of everything around you, till your limbs will be numbed, and your blood chilled,——"

"And then——?"

"Oh, Josiah, do not hold me like that, and look at me so angrily."

"And even then I will bear my burden till the Lord in his mercy shall see fit to relieve me. Even then I will endure, though a bare bodkin or a leaf of hemlock would put an end to it. Let me pass on; you need fear nothing."

She did let him pass without another word, and he went out of the house, shutting the door after him noiselessly, and closing the wicket-gate of the garden. For a while she sat herself down on the nearest chair, and tried to make up her mind how she might best treat him in his present state of mind. As regarded the present morning her heart was at ease. She knew that he would do now nothing of that which she had apprehended. She could trust him not to be false in his word to her, though she could not before have trusted him not to commit so much heavier a sin. If he would really employ himself from morning till night among the poor, he would be better so,—his trouble would be easier of endurance,—than with any other employment which he could adopt. What she most dreaded was that he should sit idle over the fire and do nothing. When he was so seated she could read his mind, as though it was open to her as a book. She had been quite right when she had accused him of over-indulgence in his grief. He did give way to it till it became a luxury to him,—a luxury which she would not have had the heart to deny him, had she not felt it to be of all luxuries the most pernicious. During these long hours, in which he would sit speechless, doing nothing, he was telling himself from minute to minute that of all God's creatures he was the most heavily afflicted, and was revelling in the sense of the injustice done to him. He was recalling all the facts of his life, his education, which had been costly, and, as regarded knowledge, successful; his vocation to the church, when in his youth he had determined to devote himself to the service of his Saviour, disregarding promotion or the favour of men; the short, sweet days of his early love, in which he had devoted himself again,—thinking nothing of self, but everything of her; his diligent working, in which he had ever done his very utmost for the parish in which he was placed, and always his best for the poorest; the success of other men who had been his compeers, and, as he too often told himself, intellec-

tually his inferiors; then of his children, who had been carried off from his love to the churchyard,—over whose graves he himself had stood, reading out the pathetic words of the funeral service with unswerving voice and a bleeding heart; and then of his children still living, who loved their mother so much better than they loved him. And he would recall all the circumstances of his poverty,—how he had been driven to accept alms, to fly from creditors, to hide himself, to see his chairs and tables seized before the eyes of those over whom he had been set as their spiritual pastor. And in it all, I think, there was nothing so bitter to the man as the derogation from the spiritual grandeur of his position as priest among men, which came as one necessary result from his poverty. St. Paul could go forth without money in his purse or shoes to his feet or two suits to his back, and his poverty never stood in the way of his preaching, or hindered the veneration of the faithful. St. Paul, indeed, was called upon to bear stripes, was flung into prison, encountered terrible dangers. But Mr. Crawley,—so he told himself,—could have encountered all that without flinching. The stripes and scorn of the unfaithful would have been nothing to him, if only the faithful would have believed in him, poor as he was, as they would have believed in him had he been rich! Even they whom he had most loved treated him almost with derision, because he was now different from them. Dean Arabin had laughed at him because he had persisted in walking ten miles through the mud instead of being conveyed in the dean's carriage; and yet, after that, he had been driven to accept the dean's charity! No one respected him. No one! His very wife thought that he was a lunatic. And now he had been publicly branded as a thief; and in all likelihood would end his days in a gaol! Such were always his thoughts as he sat idle, silent, moody, over the fire; and his wife well knew their currents. It would certainly be better that he should drive himself to some employment, if any employment could be found possible to him.

When she had been alone for a few minutes, Mrs. Crawley got up from her chair, and going into the kitchen, lighted the fire there, and put the kettle over it, and began to prepare such breakfast for her husband as the means in the house afforded. Then she called the sleeping servant-girl, who was little more than a child, and went into her own girl's room, and then she got into bed with her daughter.

"I have been up with your papa, dear, and I am cold."

"Oh, mamma, poor mamma! Why is papa up so early?"

"He has gone out to visit some of the brickmakers before they go to their work. It is better for him to be employed."

"But, mamma, it is pitch dark."

"Yes, dear, it is still dark. Sleep again for a while, and I will sleep too. I think Grace will be here to-night, and then there will be no room for me here."

Mr. Crawley went forth and made his way with rapid steps to a portion of his parish nearly two miles distant from his house, through which was carried a canal, affording water communication in some intricate way both to London and Bristol. And on the brink of this canal there had sprung up a colony of brickmakers, the nature of the earth in those parts combining with the canal to make brickmaking a suitable trade. The workmen there assembled were not, for the most part, native-born Hogglestockians, or folk descended from Hogglestockian parents. They had come thither from unknown regions, as labourers of that class do come when they are needed. Some young men from that and neighbouring parishes had joined themselves to the colony, allured by wages, and disregarding the menaces of the neighbouring farmers; but they were all in appearance and manners nearer akin to the race of navvies than to ordinary rural labourers. They had a bad name in the country; but it may be that their name was worse than their deserts. The farmers hated them, and consequently they hated the farmers. They had a beershop, and a grocer's shop, and a huxter's shop for their own accommodation, and were consequently vilified by the small old-established tradesmen around them. They got drunk occasionally, but I doubt whether they drank more than did the farmers themselves on market-day. They fought among themselves sometimes, but they forgave each other freely, and seemed to have no objection to black eyes. I fear that they were not always good to their wives, nor were their wives always good to them; but it should be remembered that among the poor, especially when they live in clusters, such misfortunes cannot be hidden as they may be amidst the decent belongings of more wealthy people. That they worked very hard was certain; and it was certain also that very few of their number ever came upon the poor rates. What became of the old brickmakers no one knew. Who ever sees a worn-out aged navvie?

Mr. Crawley, ever since his first coming into Hogglestock, had been very busy among these brickmakers, and by no means without success. Indeed the farmers had quarrelled with him because the brickmakers had so crowded the narrow parish church, as to leave but scant room for decent people. "Doo they folk pay tithes? That's what I want 'un to tell me?" argued one farmer, — not altogether unnaturally, believing as he did that Mr. Crawley was paid by tithes out of his own

pocket. But Mr. Crawley had done his best to make the brickmakers welcome at the church, scandalizing the farmers by causing them to sit or stand in any portion of the church which was hitherto unappropriated. He had been constant in his personal visits to them, and had felt himself to be more a St. Paul with them than with any other of his neighbours around him.

It was a cold morning, but the rain of the preceding evening had given way to frost, and the air, though sharp, was dry. The ground under the feet was crisp, having felt the wind and frost, and was no longer clogged with mud. In his present state of mind the walk was good for our poor pastor, and exhilarated him; but still, as he went, he thought always of his injuries. His own wife believed that he was about to commit suicide, and for so believing he was very angry with her; and yet, as he well knew, the idea of making away with himself had flitted through his own mind a dozen times. Not from his own wife could he get real sympathy. He would see what he could do with a certain brickmaker of his acquaintance.

"Are you here, Dan?" he said, knocking at the door of a cottage which stood alone, close to the towing-path of the canal, and close also to a forlorn corner of the muddy, watery, ugly, disordered brickfield. It was now just past six o'clock, and the men would be rising, as in midwinter they commenced their work at seven. The cottage was an unalluring, straight brick-built tenement, seeming as though intended to be one of a row which had never progressed beyond Number One. A voice answered from the interior, inquiring who was the visitor, to which Mr. Crawley replied by giving his name. Then the key was turned in the lock, and Dan Morris, the brickmaker, appeared with a candle in his hand. He had been engaged in lighting the fire, with a view to his own breakfast. "Where is your wife, Dan?" asked Mr. Crawley. The man answered by pointing with a short poker, which he held in his hand, to the bed, which was half screened from the room by a ragged curtain, which hung from the ceiling half-way down to the floor. "And are the Darvels here?" asked Mr. Crawley. Then Morris, again using the poker, pointed upwards, showing that the Darvels were still in their own allotted abode upstairs.

"You're early out, Muster Crawley," said Morris, and then he went on with his fire. "Drat the sticks, if they bean't as wet as the old 'un hisself. Get up, old woman, and do you do it, for I can't. They wun't kindle for me, nohow." But the old woman, having well noted the presence of Mr. Crawley, thought it better to remain where she was.

Mr. Crawley sat himself down by the obstinate fire, and began to arrange the sticks. "Dan, Dan," said a voice from the bed, "sure you wouldn't let his reverence trouble himself with the fire."

"How be I to keep him from it, if he chooses? I didn't ax him." Then Morris stood by and watched, and after a while Mr. Crawley succeeded in his attempt.

"How could it burn when you had not given the small spark a current of air to help it?" said Mr. Crawley.

"In course not," said the woman, "but he be such a stupid."

The husband said no word in acknowledgment of this compliment, nor did he thank Mr. Crawley for what he had done, nor appear as though he intended to take any notice of him. He was going on with his work when Mr. Crawley again interrupted him.

"How did you get back from Silverbridge yesterday, Dan?"

"Footed it,—all the blessed way."

"It's only eight miles."

"And I footed it there, and that's sixteen. And I paid one-and-sixpence for beer and grub;—s'help me, I did."

"Dan!" said the voice from the bed, rebuking him for the impropriety of his language.

"Well; I beg pardon, but I did. And they guv' me two bob;—just two plain shillings, by ——"

"Dan!"

"And I'd 've arned three-and-six here at brickmaking easy; that's what I would. How's a poor man to live that way? They'll not cotch me at Barchester 'Sizes at that price; they may be sure of that. Look there,—that's what I've got for my day." And he put his hand into his breeches'-pocket and fetched out a sixpence. "How's a man to fill his belly out of that? Damnation!"

"Dan!"

"Well, what did I say? Hold your jaw, will you, and not be halloaing at me that way? I know what I'm a saying of, and what I'm a doing of."

"I wish they'd given you something more with all my heart," said Crawley.

"We knows that," said the woman from the bed. "We is sure of that, your reverence."

"Sixpence!" said the man, scornfully. "If they'd have guv me nothing at all but the run of my teeth at the public-house, I'd 've taken it better. But sixpence!"

Then there was a pause. "And what have they given to me?" said

Mr. Crawley, when the man's ill-humour about his sixpence had so far subsided as to allow of his busying himself again about the premises.

"Yes, indeed;—yes, indeed," said the woman. "Yes, yes, we feel that; we do indeed, Mr. Crawley."

"I tell you what, sir; for another sixpence I'd 've sworn you'd never guv' me the paper at all; and so I will now, if it bean't too late;—sixpence or no sixpence. What do I care? d— them."

"Dan!"

"And why shouldn't I? They hain't got brains enough among them to winny the truth from the lies,—not among the lot of 'em. I'll swear afore the judge that you didn't give it me at all, if that'll do any good."

"Man, do you think I would have you perjure yourself, even if that would do me a service? And do you think that any man was ever served by a lie?"

"Faix, among them chaps it don't do to tell them too much of the truth. Look at that!" And he brought out the sixpence again from his breeches'-pocket. "And look at your reverence. Only that they've let you out for a while, they've been nigh as hard on you as though you were one of us."

"If they think that I stole it, they have been right," said Mr. Crawley.

"It's been along of that chap, Soames," said the woman. "The lord would 've paid the money out of his own pocket and never said not a word."

"If they think that I've been a thief, they've done right," repeated Mr. Crawley. "But how can they think so? How can they think so? Have I lived like a thief among them?"

"For the matter o' that, if a man ain't paid for his work by them as is his employers, he must pay hisself. Them's my notions. Look at that!" Whereupon he again pulled out the sixpence, and held it forth in the palm of his hand.

"You believe, then," said Mr. Crawley, speaking very slowly, "that I did steal the money. Speak out, Dan; I shall not be angry. As you go you are honest men, and I want to know what such of you think about it."

"He don't think nothing of the kind," said the woman, almost getting out of bed in her energy. "If he'd athought the like o' that in his head, I'd read 'un such a lesson he'd never think again the longest day he had to live."

"Speak out, Dan," said the clergyman, not attending to the

woman. "You can understand that no good can come of a lie." Dan Morris scratched his head. "Speak out, man, when I tell you," said Crawley.

"Drat it all," said Dan, "where's the use of so much jaw about it?"

"Say you know his reverence is as innocent as the babe as isn't born," said the woman.

'No; I won't,—say nothing of the kind," said Dan.

"Speak out the truth," said Crawley.

"They do say, among 'em," said Dan, "that you picked it up, and then got a woolgathering in your head till you didn't rightly know where it come from." Then he paused. "And after a bit you guv' it me to get the money. Didn't you, now?"

"I did."

"And they do say if a poor man had done it, it'd been stealing, for sartain."

"And I'm a poor man,—the poorest in all Hogglestock; and, therefore, of course, it is stealing. Of course I am a thief. Yes; of course I am a thief. When did not the world believe the worst of the poor?" Having so spoken, Mr. Crawley rose from his chair and hurried out of the cottage, waiting no further reply from Dan Morris or his wife. And as he made his way slowly home, not going there by the direct road, but by a long circuit, he told himself that there could be no sympathy for him anywhere. Even Dan Morris, the brickmaker, thought that he was a thief.

"And am I a thief?" he said to himself, standing in the middle of the road, with his hands up to his forehead.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BISHOP'S ANGEL.

It was nearly nine before Mr. Crawley got back to his house, and found his wife and daughter waiting breakfast for him. "I should not wonder if Grace were over here to-day," said Mrs. Crawley. "She'd better remain where she is," said he. After this the meal passed almost without a word. When it was over, Jane, at a sign from her mother, went up to her father and asked him whether she should read

with him. "Not now," he said, "not just now. I must rest my brain before it will be fit for any work." Then he got into the chair over the fire, and his wife began to fear that he would remain there all the day.

But the morning was not far advanced, when there came a visitor who disturbed him, and by disturbing him did him real service. Just at ten there arrived at the little gate before the house a man on a pony, whom Jane espied, standing there by the pony's head and looking about for some one to relieve him from the charge of his steed. This was Mr. Thumble, who had ridden over to Hogglestock on a poor spavined brute belonging to the bishop's stable, and which had once been the bishop's cob. Now it was the vehicle by which Mrs. Proudie's episcopal messages were sent backwards and forwards through a twelve-miles ride round Barchester; and so many were the lady's requirements, that the poor animal by no means eat the hay of idleness. Mr. Thumble had suggested to Mrs. Proudie, after their interview with the bishop and the giving up of the letter to the clerical messenger's charge, that before hiring a gig from the Dragon of Wantley, he should be glad to know,—looking as he always did to "Mary Anne and the children,"—whence the price of the gig was to be returned to him. Mrs. Proudie had frowned at him,—not with all the austerity of frowning which she could use when really angered, but simply with a frown which gave her some little time for thought, and would enable her to continue the rebuke if, after thinking, she should find that rebuke was needed. But mature consideration showed her that Mr. Thumble's caution was not without reason. Were the bishop energetic, —or even the bishop's managing chaplain as energetic as he should be, Mr. Crawley might, as Mrs. Proudie felt assured, be made in some way to pay for a conveyance for Mr. Thumble. But the energy was lacking, and the price of the gig, if the gig were ordered, would certainly fall ultimately upon the bishop's shoulders. This was very sad. Mrs. Proudie had often grieved over the necessary expenditure of episcopal surveillance, and had been heard to declare her opinion that a liberal allowance for secret service should be made in every diocese. What better could the Ecclesiastical Commissioners do with all those rich revenues which they had stolen from the bishops? But there was no such liberal allowance at present, and, therefore, Mrs. Proudie, after having frowned at Mr. Thumble for some seconds, desired him to take the grey cob. Now, Mr. Thumble had ridden the grey cob before, and would much have preferred a gig. But even the grey cob was better than a gig at his own cost.

"Mamma, there's a man at the gate wanting to come in," said Jane. "I think he's a clergyman."

Mr. Crawley immediately raised his head, though he did not at once leave his chair. Mrs. Crawley went to the window, and recognized the reverend visitor. "My dear, it is that Mr. Thumble, who is so much with the bishop."

"What does Mr. Thumble want with me?"

"Nay, my dear; he will tell you that himself." But Mrs. Crawley, though she answered him with a voice intended to be cheerful, greatly feared the coming of this messenger from the palace. She perceived at once that the bishop was about to interfere with her husband in consequence of that which the magistrates had done yesterday.

"Mamma, he doesn't know what to do with his pony," said Jane.

"Tell him to tie it to the rail," said Mr. Crawley. "If he has expected to find menials here, as he has them at the palace, he will be wrong. If he wants to come in here, let him tie the beast to the rail." So Jane went out and sent a message to Mr. Thumble by the girl, and Mr. Thumble did tie the pony to the rail, and followed the girl into the house. Jane in the meantime had retired out by the back door to the school, but Mrs. Crawley kept her ground. She kept her ground although she almost believed that her husband would prefer to have the field to himself. As Mr. Thumble did not at once enter the room, Mr. Crawley stalked to the door, and stood with it open in his hand. Though he knew Mr. Thumble's person, he was not acquainted with him, and therefore he simply bowed to the visitor, bowing more than once or twice with a cold courtesy, which did not put Mr. Thumble altogether at his ease. "My name is Mr. Thumble," said the visitor, —"The Reverend Caleb Thumble," and he held the bishop's letter in his hand. Mr. Crawley seemed to take no notice of the letter, but motioned Mr. Thumble with his hand into the room.

"I suppose you have come over from Barchester this morning?" said Mrs. Crawley.

"Yes, madam,—from the palace." Mr. Thumble, though a humble man in positions in which he felt that humility would become him,—a humble man to his betters, as he himself would have expressed it,—had still about him something of that pride which naturally belonged to those clergymen who were closely attached to the palace at Barchester. Had he been sent on a message to Plumstead,—could any such message from Barchester palace have been possible, he would have been properly humble in his demeanour to the archdeacon, or to Mrs. Grantly had he been admitted to the august presence of that

lady; but he was aware that humility would not become him on his present mission; he had been expressly ordered to be firm by Mrs. Proudie, and firm he meant to be; and therefore, in communicating to Mrs. Crawley the fact that he had come from the palace, he did load the tone of his voice with something of dignity which Mr. Crawley might perhaps be excused for regarding as arrogance.

"And what does the 'palace' want with me?" said Mr. Crawley. Mrs. Crawley knew at once that there was to be a battle. Nay, the battle had begun. Nor was she altogether sorry; for though she could not trust her husband to sit alone all day in his arm-chair over the fire, she could trust him to carry on a disputation with any other clergyman on any subject whatever. "What does the palace want with me?" And as Mr. Crawley asked the question he stood erect, and looked Mr. Thumble full in the face. Mr. Thumble called to mind the fact, that Mr. Crawley was a very poor man indeed,—so poor that he owed money all round the country to butchers and bakers, and the other fact, that he, Mr. Thumble himself, did not owe any money to any one, his wife luckily having a little income of her own; and, strengthened by these remembrances, he endeavoured to bear Mr. Crawley's attack with gallantry.

"Of course, Mr. Crawley, you are aware that this unfortunate affair at Silverbridge ——"

"I am not prepared, sir, to discuss the unfortunate affair at Silverbridge with a stranger. If you are the bearer of any message to me from the Bishop of Barchester, perhaps you will deliver it."

"I have brought a letter," said Mr. Thumble. Then Mr. Crawley stretched out his hand without a word, and taking the letter with him to the window, read it very slowly. When he had made himself master of its contents, he refolded the letter, placed it again in the envelope, and returned to the spot where Mr. Thumble was standing. "I will answer the bishop's letter," he said; "I will answer it of course, as it is fitting that I should do. Shall I ask you to wait for my reply, or shall I send it by course of post?"

"I think, Mr. Crawley, as the bishop wishes me to undertake the duty ——"

"You will not undertake the duty, Mr. Thumble. You need not trouble yourself, for I shall not surrender my pulpit to you."

"But the bishop ——"

"I care nothing for the bishop in this matter." So much he spoke in anger, and then he corrected himself. "I crave the bishop's pardon, and yours as his messenger, if in the heat occasioned by my strong

feelings I have said aught which may savour of irreverence towards his lordship's office. I respect his lordship's high position as bishop of this diocese, and I bow to his commands in all things lawful. But I must not bow to him in things unlawful, nor must I abandon my duty before God at his bidding, unless his bidding be given in accordance with the canons of the Church and the laws of the land. It will be my duty, on the coming Sunday, to lead the prayers of my people in the church of my parish, and to preach to them from my pulpit; and that duty, with God's assistance, I will perform. Nor will I allow any clergyman to interfere with me in the performance of those sacred offices,—no, not though the bishop himself should be present with the object of enforcing his illegal command." Mr. Crawley spoke these words without hesitation, even with eloquence, standing upright, and with something of a noble anger gleaming over his poor wan face; and, I think, that while speaking them, he was happier than he had been for many a long day.

Mr. Thumble listened to him patiently, standing with one foot a little in advance of the other, with one hand folded over the other, with his head rather on one side, and with his eyes fixed on the corner where the wall and ceiling joined each other. He had been told to be firm, and he was considering how he might best display firmness. He thought that he remembered some story of two parsons fighting for one pulpit, and he thought also that he should not himself like to incur the scandal of such a proceeding in the diocese. As to the law in the matter he knew nothing himself; but he presumed that a bishop would probably know the law better than a perpetual curate. That Mrs. Proudie was intemperate and imperious, he was aware. Had the message come from her alone, he might have felt that even for her sake he had better give way. But as the despotic arrogance of the lady had been in this case backed by the timid presence and hesitating words of her lord, Mr. Thumble thought that he must have the law on his side. "I think you will find, Mr. Crawley," said he, "that the bishop's inhibition is strictly legal." He had picked up the powerful word from Mrs. Proudie and flattered himself that it might be of use to him in carrying his purpose.

"It is illegal," said Mr. Crawley, speaking somewhat louder than before, "and will be absolutely futile. As you pleaded to me that you yourself and your own personal convenience were concerned in this matter, I have made known my intentions to you, which otherwise I should have made known only to the bishop. If you please, we will discuss the subject no further."

"Am I to understand, Mr. Crawley, that you refuse to obey the bishop?"

"The bishop has written to me, sir; and I will make known my intention to the bishop by a written answer. As you have been the bearer of the bishop's letter to me, I am bound to ask you whether I shall be indebted to you for carrying back my reply, or whether I shall send it by course of post?" Mr. Thumble considered for a moment, and then made up his mind that he had better wait, and carry back the epistle. This was Friday, and the letter could not be delivered by post till the Saturday morning. Mrs. Proudie might be angry with him if he should be the cause of loss of time. He did not, however, at all like waiting, having perceived that Mr. Crawley, though with language courteously worded, had spoken of him as a mere messenger.

"I think," he said, "that I may, perhaps, best further the object which we must all have in view, that namely of providing properly for the Sunday services of the church of Hogglestock, by taking your reply personally to the bishop."

"That provision is my care and need trouble no one else," said Mr. Crawley, in a loud voice. Then, before seating himself at his old desk, he stood awhile, pondering, with his back turned to his visitor. "I have to ask your pardon, sir," said he, looking round for a moment, "because, by reason of the extreme poverty of this house, my wife is unable to offer to you that hospitality which is especially due from one clergyman to another."

"Oh, don't mention it," said Mr. Thumble.

"If you will allow me, sir, I would prefer that it should be mentioned." Then he seated himself at his desk, and commenced his letter.

Mr. Thumble felt himself to be awkwardly placed. Had there been no third person in the room he could have sat down in Mr. Crawley's arm-chair, and waited patiently till the letter should be finished. But Mrs. Crawley was there, and of course he was bound to speak to her. In what strain could he do so? Even he, little as he was given to indulge in sentiment, had been touched by the man's appeal to his own poverty, and he felt, moreover, that Mrs. Crawley must have been deeply moved by her husband's position with reference to the bishop's order. It was quite out of the question that he should speak of that, as Mr. Crawley would, he was well aware, immediately turn upon him. At last he thought of a subject, and spoke with a voice intended to be pleasant. "That was the school-house I passed, probably, just as I came here?" Mrs. Crawley told him that it was the school-house. "Ah, yes, I thought so. Have you a certified teacher here?" Mrs. Crawley

explained that no Government aid had ever reached Hogglestock. Besides themselves, they had only a young woman whom they themselves had instructed. "Ah, that is a pity," said Mr. Thumble.

"I,—I am the certified teacher," said Mr. Crawley, turning round upon him from his chair.

"Oh, ah, yes," said Mr. Thumble; and after that Mr. Thumble asked no more questions about the Hogglestock school. Soon afterwards Mrs. Crawley left the room, seeing the difficulty under which Mr. Thumble was labouring, and feeling sure that her presence would not now be necessary. Mr. Crawley's letter was written quickly, though every now and then he would sit for a moment with his pen poised in the air, searching his memory for a word. But the words came to him easily, and before an hour was over he had handed his letter to Mr. Thumble. The letter was as follows:—

"The Parsonage, Hogglestock, Dec. 186—.

"RIGHT REVEREND LORD,

"I HAVE received the letter of yesterday's date which your lordship has done me the honour of sending to me by the hands of the Reverend Mr. Thumble, and I avail myself of that gentleman's kindness to return to you an answer by the same means, moved thus to use his patience chiefly by the consideration that in this way my reply to your lordship's injunctions may be in your hands with less delay than would attend the regular course of the mail-post.

"It is with deep regret that I feel myself constrained to inform your lordship that I cannot obey the command which you have laid upon me with reference to the services of my church in this parish. I cannot permit Mr. Thumble, or any other delegate from your lordship, to usurp my place in my pulpit. I would not have you to think, if I can possibly dispel such thoughts from your mind, that I disregard your high office, or that I am deficient in that respectful obedience to the bishop set over me, which is due to the authority of the Crown as the head of the church in these realms; but in this, as in all questions of obedience, he who is required to obey must examine the extent of the authority exercised by him who demands obedience. Your lordship might possibly call upon me, using your voice as bishop of the diocese, to abandon altogether the freehold rights which are now mine in this perpetual curacy. The judge of assize, before whom I shall soon stand for my trial, might command me to retire to prison without a verdict given by the jury. The magistrates who committed me so lately as yesterday, upon whose decision in that respect your lordship has taken

action against me so quickly, might have equally strained their authority. But in no case, in this land, is he that is subject bound to obey, further than where the law gives authority and exacts obedience. It is not in the power of the Crown itself to inhibit me from the performance of my ordinary duties in this parish by any such missive as that sent to me by your lordship. If your lordship think it right to stop my mouth as a clergyman in your diocese, you must proceed to do so in an ecclesiastical court in accordance with the laws, and will succeed in your object, or fail, in accordance with the evidences as to ministerial fitness or unfitness, which may be produced respecting me before the proper tribunal.

"I will allow that much attention is due from a clergyman to pastoral advice given to him by his bishop. On that head I must first express to your lordship my full understanding that your letter has not been intended to convey advice, but an order;—an inhibition, as your messenger, the Reverend Mr. Thumble, has expressed it. There might be a case certainly in which I should submit myself to counsel, though I should resist command. No counsel, however, has been given,—except indeed that I should receive your messenger in a proper spirit, which I hope I have done. No other advice has been given me, and therefore there is now no such case as that I have imagined. But in this matter, my lord, I could not have accepted advice from living man, no, not though the hands of the apostles themselves had made him bishop who tendered it to me, and had set him over me for my guidance. I am in a terrible straight. Trouble, and sorrow, and danger are upon me and mine. It may well be, as your lordship says, that the bitter waters of the present hour may pass over my head and destroy me. I thank your lordship for telling me whither I am to look for assistance. Truly I know not whether there is any to be found for me on earth. But the deeper my troubles, the greater my sorrow, the more pressing my danger, the stronger is my need that I should carry myself in these days with that outward respect of self which will teach those around me to know that, let who will condemn me, I have not condemned myself. Were I to abandon my pulpit, unless forced to do so by legal means, I should in doing so be putting a plea of guilty against myself upon the record. This, my lord, I will not do.

"I have the honour to be, my lord,

"Your lordship's most obedient servant,

"Josiah Crawley."

When he had finished writing his letter he read it over slowly, and

then handed it to Mr. Thumble. The act of writing, and the current of the thoughts through his brain, and the feeling that in every word written he was getting the better of the bishop,—all this joined to a certain manly delight in warfare against authority, lighted up the man's face and gave to his eyes an expression which had been long wanting to them. His wife at that moment came into the room and he looked at her with an air of triumph as he handed the letter to Mr. Thumble. "If you will give that to his lordship with an assurance of my duty to his lordship in all things proper, I will thank you kindly, craving your pardon for the great delay to which you have been subjected."

"As to the delay, that is nothing," said Mr. Thumble.

"It has been much; but you as a clergyman will feel that it has been incumbent on me to speak my mind fully."

"Oh, yes; of course." Mr. Crawley was standing up, as also was Mrs. Crawley. It was evident to Mr. Thumble that they both expected that he should go. But he had been specially enjoined to be firm, and he doubted whether hitherto he had been firm enough. As far as this morning's work had as yet gone, it seemed to him that Mr. Crawley had had the play all to himself, and that he, Mr. Thumble, had not had his innings. He, from the palace, had been, as it were, cowed by this man, who had been forced to plead his own poverty. It was certainly incumbent upon him, before he went, to speak up, not only for the bishop, but for himself also. "Mr. Crawley," he said, "hitherto I have listened to you patiently."

"Nay," said Mr. Crawley, smiling, "you have indeed been patient, and I thank you; but my words have been written, not spoken."

"You have told me that you intend to disobey the bishop's inhibition."

"I have told the bishop so certainly."

"May I ask you now to listen to me for a few minutes?"

Mr. Crawley, still smiling, still having in his eyes the unwonted triumph which had lighted them up, paused a moment, and then answered him. "Reverend sir, you must excuse me if I say no,—not on this subject."

"You will not let me speak?"

"No; not on this matter, which is very private to me. What should you think if I went into your house and inquired of you as to those things which were particularly near to you?"

"But the bishop sent me."

"Though ten bishops had sent me,—a council of archbishops if you will!" Mr. Thumble started back, appalled at the energy of the words

used to him. "Shall a man have nothing of his own;—no sorrow in his heart, no care in his family, no thought in his breast so private and special to him, but that, if he happen to be a clergyman, the bishop may touch it with his thumb?"

"I am not the bishop's thumb," said Mr. Thumble, drawing himself up.

"I intended not to hint anything personally objectionable to yourself. I will regard you as one of the angels of the church." Mr. Thumble, when he heard this, began to be sure that Mr. Crawley was mad; he knew of no angels that could ride about the Barsetshire lanes on grey ponies. "And as such I will respect you; but I cannot discuss with you the matter of the bishop's message."

"Oh, very well. I will tell his lordship."

"I will pray you to do so."

"And his lordship, should he so decide, will arm me with such power on my next coming as will enable me to carry out his lordship's wishes."

"His lordship will abide by the law, as will you also." In speaking these last words he stood with the door in his hand, and Mr. Thumble, not knowing how to increase or even to maintain his firmness, thought it best to pass out, and mount his grey pony and ride away.

"The poor man thought that you were laughing at him when you called him an angel of the church," said Mrs. Crawley, coming up to him and smiling on him.

"Had I told him he was simply a messenger, he would have taken it worse;—poor fool! When they have rid themselves of me they may put him here, in my church; but not yet,—not yet. Where is Jane? Tell her that I am ready to commence the Seven against Thebes with her." Then Jane was immediately sent for out of the school, and the Seven against Thebes was commenced with great energy. Often during the next hour and a half Mrs. Crawley from the kitchen would hear him reading out, or rather saying by rote, with sonorous, rolling voice, great passages from some chorus, and she was very thankful to the bishop who had sent over to them a message and a messenger which had been so salutary in their effect upon her husband. "In truth an angel of the church," she said to herself as she chopped up the onions for the mutton-broth; and ever afterwards she regarded Mr. Thumble as an "angel."

CHAPTER XIV.

MAJOR GRANTLY CONSULTS A FRIEND.

Grace Crawley passed through Silverbridge on her way to Allington on the Monday, and on the Tuesday morning Major Grantly received a very short note from Miss Prettyman, telling him that she had done so. "Dear Sir,—I think you will be glad to learn that our friend Miss Crawley went from us yesterday on a visit to her friend, Miss Dale, at Allington.—Yours truly, Annabella Prettyman." The note said no more than that. Major Grantly was glad to get it, obtaining from it that satisfaction which a man always feels when he is presumed to be concerned in the affairs of the lady with whom he is in love. And he regarded Miss Prettyman with favourable eyes,—as a discreet and friendly woman. Nevertheless, he was not altogether happy. The very fact that Miss Prettyman should write to him on such a subject made him feel that he was bound to Grace Crawley. He knew enough of himself to be sure that he could not give her up without making himself miserable. And yet, as regarded her father, things were going from bad to worse. Everybody now said that the evidence was so strong against Mr. Crawley as to leave hardly a doubt of his guilt. Even the ladies in Silverbridge were beginning to give up his cause, acknowledging that the money could not have come rightfully into his hands, and excusing him on the plea of partial insanity. "He has picked it up and put it by for months, and then thought that it was his own." The ladies of Silverbridge could find nothing better to say for him than that; and when young Mr. Walker remarked that such little mistakes were the customary causes of men being taken to prison, the ladies of Silverbridge did not know how to answer him. It had come to be their opinion that Mr. Crawley was affected with a partial lunacy, which ought to be forgiven in one to whom the world had been so cruel; and when young Mr. Walker endeavoured to explain to them that a man must be sane altogether or mad altogether, and that Mr. Crawley must, if sane, be locked up as a thief, and if mad, locked up as a madman, they sighed, and were convinced that until the world should have been improved by a new infusion of romance, and a stronger feeling of poetic justice, Mr. John Walker was right.

And the result of this general opinion made its way out to Major Grantly, and made its way, also, to the archdeacon at Plumstead. As to the major, in giving him his due, it must be explained that the more certain he became of the father's guilt, the more certain also he became of the daughter's merits. It was very hard. The whole thing was cruelly hard. It was cruelly hard upon him that he should be brought into this trouble, and be forced to take upon himself the armour of a knight-errant for the redress of the wrong on the part of the young lady. But when alone in his house, or with his child, he declared to himself that he would do so. It might well be that he could not live in Barsetshire after he had married Mr. Crawley's daughter. He had inherited from his father enough of that longing for ascendancy among those around him to make him feel that in such circumstances he would be wretched. But he would be made more wretched by the self-knowledge that he had behaved badly to the girl he loved; and the world beyond Barsetshire was open to him. He would take her with him to Canada, to New Zealand, or to some other far-away-country, and there begin his life again. Should his father choose to punish him for so doing by disinheriting him, they would be poor enough; but, in his present frame of mind, the major was able to regard such poverty as honourable and not altogether disagreeable.

He had been out shooting all day at Chaldicotes, with Dr. Thorne and a party who were staying in the house there, and had been talking about Mr. Crawley, first with one man and then with another. Lord Lufton had been there, and young Gresham from Greshamsbury, and Mr. Robarts the clergyman, and news had come among them of the attempt made by the bishop to stop Mr. Crawley from preaching. Mr. Robarts had been of opinion that Mr. Crawley should have given way; and Lord Lufton, who shared his mother's intense dislike of everything that came from the palace, had sworn that he was right to resist. The sympathy of the whole party had been with Mr. Crawley; but they had all agreed that he had stolen the money.

"I fear he'll have to give way to the bishop at last," Lord Lufton had said.

"And what on earth will become of his children?" said the doctor. "Think of the fate of that pretty girl; for she is a very pretty girl. It will be ruin to her. No man will allow himself to fall in love with her when her father shall have been found guilty of stealing a cheque for twenty pounds."

"We must do something for the whole family," said the lord. "I say, Thorne, you haven't half the game here that there used to be in poor old Sowerby's time."

"Haven't I?" said the doctor. "You see Sowerby had been at it all his days, and never did anything else. I only began late in life."

The major had intended to stay and dine at Chaldicotes, but when he heard what was said about Grace, his heart became sad, and he made some excuse as to his child, and returned home. Dr. Thorne had declared that no man could allow himself to fall in love with her. But what if a man had fallen in love with her beforehand? What if a man had not only fallen in love, but spoken of his love? Had he been alone with the doctor, he would, I think, have told him the whole of his trouble; for in all the county there was no man whom he would sooner have trusted with his secret. This Dr. Thorne was known far and wide for his soft heart, his open hand, and his well-sustained indifference to the world's opinions on most of those social matters with which the world meddles; and therefore the words which he had spoken had more weight with Major Grantly than they would have had from other lips. As he drove home he almost made up his mind that he would consult Dr. Thorne upon the matter. There were many younger men with whom he was very intimate,—Frank Gresham, for instance, and Lord Lufton himself; but this was an affair which he hardly knew how to discuss with a young man. To Dr. Thorne he thought that he could bring himself to tell the whole story.

In the evening there came to him a messenger from Plumstead, with a letter from his father and some present for the child. He knew at once that the present had been thus sent as an excuse for the letter. His father might have written by the post, of course; but that would have given to his letter a certain air and tone which he had not wished it to bear. After some message from the major's mother, and some allusion to Edith, the archdeacon struck off upon the matter that was near his heart.

"I fear it is all up with that unfortunate man at Hogglestock," he said. "From what I hear of the evidence which came out before the magistrates, there can, I think, be no doubt as to his guilt. Have you heard that the bishop sent over on the following day to stop him from preaching? He did so, and sent again on the Sunday. But Crawley would not give way, and so far I respect the man; for, as a matter of course, whatever the bishop did, or attempted to do, he would do with an extreme of bad taste, probably with gross ignorance as to his own duty and as to the duty of the man under him. I am told that on the first day Crawley turned out of his house the messenger sent to him,—some stray clergyman whom Mrs. Proudie keeps about the house; and that on the Sunday the stairs to the reading-desk and pulpit were

occupied by a lot of brickmakers, among whom the parson from Barchester did not venture to attempt to make his way, although he was fortified by the presence of one of the cathedral vergers and by one of the palace footmen. I can hardly believe about the verger and the footman. As for the rest, I have no doubt it is all true. I pity Crawley from my heart. Poor, unfortunate man! The general opinion seems to be that he is not in truth responsible for what he has done. As for his victory over the bishop, nothing on earth could be better.

"Your mother particularly wishes you to come over to us before the end of the week, and to bring Edith. Your grandfather will be here, and he is becoming so infirm that he will never come to us for another Christmas. Of course you will stay over the new year."

Though the letter was full of Mr. Crawley and his affairs there was not a word in it about Grace. This, however, was quite natural. Major Grantly perfectly well understood his father's anxiety to carry his point without seeming to allude to the disagreeable subject. "My father is very clever," he said to himself, "very clever. But he isn't so clever but one can see how clever he is."

On the next day he went into Silverbridge, intending to call on Miss Prettyman. He had not quite made up his mind what he would say to Miss Prettyman; nor was he called upon to do so, as he never got as far as that lady's house. While walking up the High Street he saw Mrs. Thorne in her carriage, and, as a matter of course, he stopped to speak to her. He knew Mrs. Thorne quite as intimately as he did her husband, and liked her quite as well. "Major Grantly," she said, speaking out loud to him, half across the street; "I was very angry with you yesterday. Why did you not come up to dinner? We had a room ready for you and everything."

"I was not quite well, Mrs. Thorne."

"Fiddlestick. Don't tell me of not being well. There was Emily breaking her heart about you."

"I'm sure Miss Dunstable——"

"To tell you the truth, I think she'll get over it. It won't be mortal with her. But do tell me, Major Grantly, what are we to think about this poor Mr. Crawley? It was so good of you to be one of his bailsmen."

"He would have found twenty in Silverbridge, if he had wanted them."

"And do you hear that he has defied the bishop? I do so like him for that. Not but what poor Mrs. Proudie is the dearest friend I have in the world, and I'm always fighting a battle with old Lady Lufton

on her behalf. But one likes to see one's friends worsted sometimes, you know."

"I don't quite understand what did happen at Hogglestock on Sunday," said the major.

"Some say he had the bishop's chaplain put under the pump. I don't believe that; but there is no doubt that when the poor fellow tried to get into the pulpit, they took him and carried him neck and heels out of the church. But, tell me, Major Grantly, what is to become of the family?"

"Heaven knows!"

"Is it not sad? And that eldest girl is so nice! They tell me that she is perfect,—not only in beauty, but in manners and accomplishments. Everybody says that she talks Greek just as well as she does English, and that she understands philosophy from the top to the bottom."

"At any rate, she is so good and so lovely that one cannot but pity her now," said the major.

"You know her, then, Major Grantly? By-the-by, of course you do, as you were staying with her at Framley."

"Yes, I know her."

"What is to become of her? I'm going your way. You might as well get into the carriage, and I'll drive you home. If he is sent to prison,—and they say he must be sent to prison,—what is to become of them?" Then Major Grantly did get into the carriage, and, before he got out again, he had told Mrs. Thorne the whole story of his love.

She listened to him with the closest attention; only interrupting him now and then with little words, intended to signify her approval. He, as he told his tale, did not look her in the face, but sat with his eyes fixed upon her muff. "And now," he said, glancing up at her almost for the first time as he finished his speech, "and now, Mrs. Thorne, what am I to do?"

"Marry her, of course," said she, raising her hand aloft and bringing it down heavily upon his knee as she gave her decisive reply.

"H—sh—h," he exclaimed, looking back in dismay towards the servants.

"Oh, they never hear anything up there. They're thinking about the last pot of porter they had, or the next they're to get. Deary me, I am so glad! Of course you'll marry her."

"You forget my father."

"No, I don't. What has a father to do with it? You're old enough to please yourself without asking your father. Besides, Lord

bless me, the archdeacon isn't the man to bear malice. He'll storm and threaten and stop the supplies for a month or so. Then he'll double them, and take your wife to his bosom, and kiss her and bless her, and all that kind of thing. We all know what parental wrath means in such cases as that."

"But my sister——"

"As for your sister, don't talk to me about her. I don't care two straws about your sister. You must excuse me, Major Grantly, but Lady Hartletop is really too big for my powers of vision."

"And Edith,—of course, Mrs. Thorne, I can't be blind to the fact that in many ways such a marriage would be injurious to her. No man wishes to be connected with a convicted thief."

"No, Major Grantly; but a man does wish to marry the girl that he loves. At least, I suppose so. And what man ever was able to give a more touching proof of his affection than you can do now? If I were you, I'd be at Allington before twelve o'clock to-morrow,—I would indeed. What does it matter about the trumpery cheque? Everybody knows it was a mistake, if he did take it. And surely you would not punish her for that."

"No,—no; but I don't suppose she'd think it a punishment."

"You go and ask her, then. And I'll tell you what. If she hasn't a house of her own to be married from, she shall be married from Chaldicotes. We'll have such a breakfast! And I'll make as much of her as if she were the daughter of my old friend, the bishop himself,—I will indeed."

This was Mrs. Thorne's advice. Before it was completed, Major Grantly had been carried half-way to Chaldicotes. When he left his impetuous friend he was too prudent to make any promise, but he declared that what she had said should have much weight with him.

"You won't mention it to anybody?" said the major.

"Certainly not, without your leave," said Mrs. Thorne. "Don't you know that I'm the soul of honour?"

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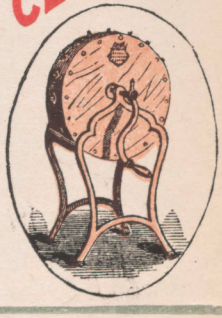

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